How Good Women Can Organize to Keep Women Good

Miss Alice C. Smith, Rockefeller's Protegee, Probation Officer of "The Night Court for Women," Presents a Theory for Solving the Problem of the Unfortunates.

MISS ALICE C. SMITH has been called "The Night Court for Women." Because she is there every night from the opening session at 8 o'clock until the court closes at 3 in the morning she knows more about the unfortunate women who pass before the bar of justice than do the judges who sit there for ten nights every month.

For twelve years she has done the work of a probation officer in New York City. She believes that at least fifty per cent of them can be brought back to right living. She says that up to the age of twenty-five the work of reclaiming them is not only possible, but, given patience, comparatively easy. After that age they are liable to be hardened and hopeless.

Miss Smith is a member of John D. Rockefeller's church, the Fifth Avenue Baptist. So much was he impressed by the value of her work among erring girls that for two years he personally paid her salary until the city created the office she fills and her name was placed on the municipal payroll.

What Miss Smith has learned about the problem of the unprotected girl in cities and how to solve the problem she tells for this newspaper.

By Alice C. Smith.

MY experience among the unprotected girls of a great city has taught me many lessons, but the greatest of these is not that the custody of the welfare and future of such girls is wholly in the hands of the city, nor in the power of the merchants or factory owners who employ them, but in greatest measure it lies among the good women of the city.

I have never known among the unprotected class in this city a woman whose case was hopeless. The difference among them is that one may be more hopeful than another. That is all. I and the good women who, with purse and influence, have helped me in my work know that at least half of the unfortunates who come under our care are sure to be brought back to ways of honor and usefulness.

When the case of a girl who has yielded to the temptation of city streets is given to me I seek first the cause of the trouble. In 50 per cent of these cases I find that the cause was a poor home—"poor," not in the sense of poverty, though that it has its influence, but poor in the sense of being inadequate to the girl's needs, poor in the sense of the ignorance of parents about the condition of life as it is to-day.

Life is lived differently than it was in their youth, and in the probably small town whence they came. They do not know what fierce white light of temptation beats upon their daughters. In nearly all of these homes I find the parents are good people, but they do not know. And because they do not know the girl faces alone the two terrible temptations. One is likely to assail her when she goes out to find work, the other when she goes to the streets in search of recreation.

Parents should not be in too great a hurry to get the girls working papers. But hard conditions force them to do this early, sometimes even before the age when the working papers are due. And the horror of the situation is that the girl from school goes out alone and unguided in search of work. In this city and others this lonely, danger-dogged search is unnecessary, did the parents but know. There is no home in the city but can have contact with some good woman whose pleasure and duty it is to point out to girls safe places to work, or dangerous localities or persons from whom to avoid employment. In every church of any faith there are visiting committees of women who are glad to give this aid. If the parents do not know such women they can apply to the pastor of the church, and he will send such a woman to them. Also there is the Charity Organization and the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. Women of these organizations can and do, by their knowledge of the city, prevent such a fate as that which befell fifteen-year-old Ruth Wheeler, who was murdered while seeking work.

The other danger point (that of the streets) the parents do not know of or do not fully realize. Reared in villages, these parents, many of them foreigners, are likely to think of the streets as playgrounds—and so they are, but playgrounds of vice.

A typical case is this: Mary, tired after her day's work, goes out alone or with a friend for a walk. Without knowing it, or meaning to be, she is a bit "fresh." She invites attention. A stranger saunters past and says, "Hello." She, interested and flattered, and ignorant, answers "Hello." Generally he asks in what direction she is going, and if she answers he asks if he may go, too. He asks her where she will be the next evening, and she probably answers that she will be walking at the same time and place. He meets her again. He proposes having a drink. Perhaps the having a drink is a novelty to her, and she accepts. After three or four more walks and drinks a new face and figure are on their way to join the procession that passes the judge's bench in the Night Court for Women.

That could have been prevented if the parents had made it possible for her to receive friends in her home, and if they had made her know that the man who does not ask to see her in her own home, but proposes other meeting places, is a scoundrel.

Fifty per cent of the women who come before the judge for sentence and hear "Blackwells Island, thirty days," are there because they came from such poorly managed homes. The remedy? Yes, I have thought of it. Society owes to every working man with a large family to support a wage of $25 a week. The middle-aged man's labor is worth that to society. He requires it to care well for his family, send his children to school until they are entitled to working papers, or after, and provide that corner for the girls which shall keep them off the streets.

But society will be slow to give them this, so what is the other remedy? It is that the good women of every district in the city organize a girls' club; let the girls know that they may come there and meet their friends. The good women of whom I have spoken can, in rotation, spend an evening there as chaperon. The girls can give parties there. There will be a piano and some one to play. There can be dancing. But there will be the watchful eye of the good woman, who apprehends the dangers the girls do not know.

Public schoolrooms, which are vacant and unused two-thirds of the time, could well be utilized for the purpose. The settlement houses and the religious organizations can open their buildings for the purpose. Their heads can say, "Come here and bring your friends. You may consider this your home parlor or sitting room." But there should always be present a chaperon, perhaps not known as such, but rather as a friend of girls.

Thirty per cent of my charges have turned from the right path because they could not live on the average wage paid to girls—six dollars a week. A girl needs nine dollars a week. Tired of the struggle to make six dollars stretch over the expense territory which requires nine dollars, she, dreading sickness, shrinking from the spectre of being laid off, which makes Christmas Eve so sad a time for many girls, for that is the time when, the holiday rush being over, thousands receive their blue envelopes, she listens to some girl who works beside her, or to some strange woman of elegant appearance, if she was not painted, who tells her how she can eke out her wages. Often they do not tell her. They say, "Come up and see me, and we will talk over your troubles." And the hard path opens for her.

Hard, did I say? Indeed, yes. Not one—I repeat it, not one—of the unfortunate women continues in the wrong life because she likes it. I have heard hundreds of them say, "How fine it is to be a good woman." And when I have said, "Why not become one?" they have answered: "It is easy for a good woman to ask that."

Public sentiment, bulwarked by the law, should require the employers to pay girls a living wage. In this city it is nine dollars. If a girl's work is worth anything it is worth that. If you could not afford to pay a servant four or five dollars a week you would do without her. The constant temptation because of the insufficient salary should be removed from a girl's path.

The remaining 20 per cent of my charges have joined the army of unfortunate women through what I classify as unschooled sentiment. They think they are in love with the first stranger who says "Hello" to them. This can be prevented by their taking their admirers to the girls' club I have described. Let Mary meet her young man there. Perhaps her friend Jane will be there with her young man at the same time. Mary has a chance to compare her young man with others. He is not the only man she knows, and she sees him in circumstances in which, if he is dross, the dross will reveal itself as not pure gold. The chaperon can gently and tactfully assist in this process.

I have shown you the causes that make the girl who comes to the Night Court a problem. I have shown you the preventives. The cure is to put her in a good boarding place, or send her home; give her a chance to begin over again. Let me tell you of some typical cases of the 2,500 in which cure has been wrought, and in this way.

One of the girls who came before the judge in the Night Court, and who was placed in my charge, we will call Jennie. I found that she had a bitter habit of mind.

"What is the use of talking to me, Miss Smith?" she exclaimed when I had taken her to the side room next the judge's chambers, where I have a preliminary talk with my charges. "You can't do anything for me. Nobody can. I was started wrong. The cards were dealt wrong to me when I was born."

I learned that the girl's mother was an abandoned woman. The girl's father had killed a man because of her mother, and was at that time an inmate of an asylum for the criminally insane. Had he not become insane he would have been sent to death in the chair. He has since died the terrible death of a raving maniac.

I told the girl that environment is more powerful than heredity. She sneered at the possibility of her having a chance to reform. She was placed in a good, clean boarding house and her body and mind rebuilt. Then we found work for her at a living wage, and because she was a bright girl she soon advanced from this position to a better one.

Her employer, a millionaire, fell in love with her. He asked her to become his wife. She refused, and when he insisted upon knowing frankly the story of her misfortune withholding nothing. A broad-minded man, who believed in the single standard of morality for men and women, he married her. Before they were married she said:

"I will give you another chance to escape what cannot be a happy marriage for you. Come with me to the home." She mentioned a refuge for women such as she had been. Together they called upon the sister superior and talked of the girl's chances for a good and happy life. The surroundings and the suggestion of the depths to which the woman he loved had fallen had no visible effect upon her suitor.

"And now do you still wish to marry me?" she asked.

"I do," was his reply.

Nine years ago they were married. They have lived happily together ever since. The wife has taken her younger brothers and sisters from the home where they were exposed to the mother's evil influence, and cared for them under her own roof, bringing them up to be good men and women, which they could not have been had they remained at home.

She keeps closely in touch with my work. She comes often to see me. She has often told me that if I had trouble in finding temporary homes for the girls to bring them to her, and she gives liberally to the cause of rescue.

Her husband knows of the friendship, and that it began in the courtroom, and sends her to me for advice in the little problems of home management.

She goes to Europe every year. She has three automobiles. She is often seen at the opera. She is one of the handsomest young matrons in New York, and has become one of the best.

Mrs. Martin was one of a large number of women who are deserted by their husbands. He left her with a sick babe. For weeks she tried to get work to support herself and the child. She failed, and one day, when the child cried from hunger, she grew desperate. When she was brought into court she told her story and begged for a chance. We gave her the chance by finding work for her. She is living an honest life in a home she has made for herself and the child. If we had taken the child from her her destination would have been the gutter.

The case of Margaret Storrs is the story of one of the poor homes which are the greatest factors producing the class of women with whom I deal. Margaret was brought into court as a first offender. Her father was with her. The judge begged her father to give his consent to place her in an institution. The father refused. He said the family needed her wages. Magistrate Barlow's voice rang through the courtroom:

"It rests with you," he said to the father. "She is under age, and I cannot place her in an institution without your consent. Unless you do this she will go down the ladder rung by rung. You know the way. First Broadway, then Sixth avenue, then the Bowery, then Chinatown, then Potter's Field."

The Court could do nothing. If she had been placed on parole I would have placed her in one of the clean working girls' homes, of which we are getting such a number in the city. There is Trowmart Inn, for example, and the home maintained by Mrs. Frederick W. Vanderbilt. The three dollars a week necessary for her board I would have gotten from some friends of mine, who are willing to help deserving cases. I would have placed her next in one of the trade schools—say, the Manhattan Trade School—where she could have been taught something she best liked to do.

When she had learned millinery or shirtwaist making or artificial flower making the school would have found work for her. That is one of the helpful features of the school, which, I understand, was founded by Miss Grace Dodge, Miss Virginia Potter and others.

I knew a girl whom at first effort we failed to save, but the next year she was wiser. I have great faith in the sad wisdom that time brings. You see, we keep at it. Often if we failed in a case last year we succeed this. A girl has lived twelve months longer, has suffered more and learned more. Up to twenty-five I find reason for hope in every added year.

The two greatest needs of the unprotected girls in this and other large cities are proper places of amusement and small preventive or protective institutions. I have pointed out the vast need and the simplicity of girls' clubs as a solution to the amusement problem. As for the small institution it succeeds where the large one fails, because of the personal element. The city is likely to deal harshly with its problems. The Municipal Lodging House, for instance, affords a night's shelter, but it is too large and necessarily machine-like to permit of personal ministration of good, high-minded women. It cannot mother them, and every girl needs mothering.

How the Business Men of America Can Save Two Millions a Day

[Editor's Note.—The author of this article is president of the Business Bourse, editor of the Efficiency Magazine, an active member of the Efficiency Society, and is retained as advising expert by many of the leading concerns as counsel upon questions relating to office and executive efficiency.

Mr. McCormack is the inventor of the original typewriter tabulator, the unit voucher system, etc.; in fact, he has possibly invented more labor-saving devices and systems for the office than any other man.

He is well known throughout the country as a lecturer on office efficiency, having given illustrated lectures upon the subject in all the leading cities, and is an acknowledged authority upon all subjects relating to office management and office efficiency.]

By H. S. McCormack.

President of the Business Bourse.

IF you raise pigs, the United States Government places at your disposal an elaborate staff of specialists who are backed by a very comprehensive system of experimental stations, and these experts will supply you with pamphlets and booklets of instructions and will otherwise help you along scientific lines.

If you are troubled or perplexed upon a question which relates to forestry, mining, navigation or, in fact, almost any subject, the Government is back of you and you are forced to appreciate that you are living in an age full of wonderful opportunities.

But if, on the other hand, you are trying to establish a business of any kind, don't expect to receive any assistance from Uncle Sam.

It is the business of the country that gives employment to the millions that makes the Government possible. When business is good, Uncle Sam is well; but when business is poor, he is very, very sick. And yet this most important part of the country's activities is ignored by Uncle Sam.

Business men are left to blaze their own trails. No lecturers are sent through the country to show them how business can be made more scientific; no special trains with data and with instructors are despatched about the country—such necessities are denied to business men, although they pay the greatest revenues to the country.

The waste through inefficient business management and failures (a large percentage of which can be avoided) has been terrific, for there is an enormous waste volume of office business done.

Every business has at least one office; many businesses have dozens of offices. There are 3,948,013 separate business offices in the country (as shown by offices having telephones), or an office to each 27 inhabitants.

Two million dollars a day is my conservative estimate, based on detailed personal knowledge of the situation, of the amount of money needlessly expended in offices throughout the country.

Eliminate one-third of three million offices as being too small to be efficient, and eliminate another million, for the sake of argument, as being 100 per cent efficient, and it is only necessary to save $1 a day per office to conserve two million dollars a day.

This estimate of $1 saving does not represent each person, but instead represents an entire office force; and, for the purpose of being conservative to a fault, but one-third of the efficiency that might be asked for is to be considered.

Even to those who have made but a limited study of office work, the estimate of only $1 a day will appear ridiculous, because the simplest analysis shows, for instance, that the average cost of business letters is from 7c. to 11c. apiece, and that it is only the highly efficient offices which handle correspondence at a cost of 5c. or 5½c. per letter.

Eliminate one-third of the unnecessary work that is performed daily in business offices throughout the country, and the saving will be nine times greater than the saving proposed through the revision of the tariff.

Capitalize the energy lost through waste effort or the needless work performed in business offices, and there is enough energy available to turn over the Panama Canal without expense to the nation.

The number of useless, needless letters written daily cannot easily be computed, but the actual loss in this direction runs into the hundreds of thousands.

Business men who would not fill their pockets with silver dimes each morning and scatter them right and left through the streets do countenance and encourage the employment of clerks who thoughtlessly and needlessly write letters which bring no return whatever to the senders.

Business men borrow money and pay 5 or 6 per cent per annum for its use, and then day by day destroy the earning power of those dollars by negligence, carelessness and thoughtlessness.

A hundred dollars is invested in a business which is supposed to earn 6 per cent, or $6.00, in 365 days; and the man who makes the investment engages an extra clerk to do unnecessary detail work and pays the clerk $12 a week, thus destroying every week the annual earning power of $200. This means that the earning power of $800 is lost every month, or the earning power of approximately $10,000 every year.

Make an analysis of the simplest office routine, and it is astounding to ascertain how much work is done over and over. Writing and rewriting appear to be the order of the day.

The fact that a man says he has a system does not make it so—if a man believes himself or his office efficient, it does not reduce his expenses, and no one is fooled but himself, while he is busy making preparations for the receiver to step in.

When a man starts to analyze what is going on in his own office it is a healthy sign. If he begins with the operation of making checks, he may find that his bookkeeper does the following:

(1). Writes the check.
(2). Copies the same information upon the stub.
(3). Makes an entry on bills or on voucher cover of distribution.
(4). Prepares some acknowledgment or receipt or enters details in distribution record.

The various forms for making payments by checks vary to such an extent that no set rule governs the handling of these transactions; but repeated investigations prove that from 3 to 7 operations are usually performed in connection with every bill and in some offices these operations are repeated day after day in the handling of hundreds of bills passed for payment.

A set of unit forms will, without repetition of any kind, eliminate two-thirds of the work now performed in the payment of bills, by combining the following operations into one:

(1). Writing of check.
(2). Writing of receipt.
(3). Writing of voucher cover.
(4). Writing of register.
(5). Writing of bookkeeper's distribution record.

It is, indeed, rare to find a firm with an efficient telegram system. The customary method is to write the telegram and retain a duplicate for the files; then write a letter and repeat therein the contents of the telegram, which is but a repetition of the work just done.

At the end of the month that becomes one of the great factors in increasing the cost of clerical work necessary to check up the bills from the telegraph office to find out who sent the various telegrams.

A system of form duplicate copies will at one writing take care of the following operations:

(1). Telegram.
(2). Office copy.
(3). Confirmation.
(4). Office register.

For many years business concerns could not get away from the old custom of filling orders from original orders. So much delay and confusion were caused through this method that finally the more progressive firms saw the advantage of taking two copies. The results secured were so satisfactory that the plan was extended to three and four copies, and many concerns are now making from five to twelve copies, so that no rewriting of orders is necessary.

While the agitation has been going on about shop management, and efficiency engineers have been lowering the cost of production, the executive office expenses and the selling expenses have been mounting higher and higher, until now it is a well-known fact that it costs 66 cents to sell and distribute articles which cost only 33 cents to manufacture.

A sale can be made in an office—it may be a doctor's office, a broker's office, or a real estate office. It is immaterial whether the sale amounts to 10 cents, $10 or $10,000; the custom is to make a charge slip of some kind, according to the transaction. The charge slip goes to the bookkeeping department, where the juggling process really starts. The amount is entered, possibly in a sales book, then becomes a journal entry, gets into the ledger, is carried to some distribution record, gets upon a bill and goes down the line, is accumulated in a sales report; and, it may be that the same amount is placed to the credit of some department. With every juggle of this item, it is hoped that when the totals of the various combinations of figures are added together the correct grand total will be secured. If not, then it means the old story of going back and taking trial balances, then checking off until the discrepancy is shown and all of the various accounts show uniform balance.

During the past fifteen or twenty years, unfortunately, there has been a tendency toward cumbrous systems which entail a lot of bookkeeping and furnish a multiplicity of records, and while these various reports and statistics are all used in some cases, little thought has been given to having the various operations combined so as to be accomplished at one writing or with one transaction.

A machine has been introduced into the Government Census Office which dispenses with hundreds of clerks; the work that formerly took ten years to accomplish is now performed at less expense in ten months.

What has been done by the Government in the matter of handling the census can be done in business houses. It will be possible to have little punching machines, so that the 10 cent, $10 or $10,000 item can be punched into a card, which card can be fed into an automatic machine, and, without transcriptions of any kind, these little punched holes in a card will take care of the seven or nine operations, which some firms consider so necessary and which entail so much work in re-writing and re-copying for the purpose of securing their various records.

From the time the raw material is ordered there is little else but office work—executives buying goods, salesmen selling them, clerks writing orders, others writing letters about the goods, attending to the billing and keeping the books.

The railroads furnish office help to write many bills for raw material, the refined material, the finished material; and the goods, from their raw state to the time they are ready for delivery to the consumer, are subjected to re-writing and are paid for by check possibly ten times, because goods in their different stages must be paid for, as well as transportation charges on them.

When the Government investigated the express companies, they found that there were eleven transcriptions, in part or in whole, that took place from the time Jones delivered a package to the company until it was received and receipted for by Smith. The Government regulations have eliminated a lot of that red tape and the public are getting better service.

One of the leading textile concerns recently conducted a test to ascertain the cost of writing each bill. It was found to be 7 cents, and this amount was independent of all selling costs, telegrams, salesmen, bookkeeping, etc.

President Wilson took a big step in the right direction a few days ago, when he placed the stamp of approval upon the work of the Efficiency and Economy Commission.

The reports of this commission covered the various departments in Washington which had undergone an inspection. The investigations have already resulted in the saving of hundreds of thousands of dollars in Government offices through the elimination of needless work.

There should be established a Government efficiency bureau to gather data and statistics for the business man to use in his office—there must be time studies, tests and experiments along the same scientific lines as are conducted in any other Government department which has been established along economic lines.

Retailers must be shown how inefficient management and inefficient distribution are one of the great factors in increasing the cost of living.